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municipal recreation bulletin

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Youth and Recreation Branch

Cooperative action

Making our communities better places to live in through inter-community cooperation in recreation is a current provincial-wide goal deserving of special attention.

The need to cooperate is more apparent in the poor, sparsely populated rural communities than in the prosperous, densely populated urban communities. However, no community wishing to provide adequate opportunities in recreation can afford to ignore the idea of inter-community cooperation.

Positive benefits can accrue:

- Two communities, one a village, the other a township, through joint meetings of their recreation committees planned, coordinated and administered a program of recreation serving both municipalities. Costs are shared.
- They recognize that recreation is, in part, a municipal responsibility. Sums of money are contributed to neighboring communities for recreational services being provided.
- Ideas are shared to improve their operations.
- Joint training courses have been conducted for playground and day camp leaders.
- Leadership and skill courses have been offered jointly.
- Cooperative public-speaking, drama, music festivals, have been presented.

Certain principles underlie the successes in these joint projects. There must be: mutual interest and concern regarding the project or activity; joint planning; unified action with each participant accepting appropriate responsibilities; benefits for each participating community.

Area or zone organization

Continuous relationships and communication are the most effective. This leads naturally to the formation of an area organization which can support such continuing relationships.

Building an area or zone organization

Three methods of organization are:

1
Convene a meeting of the members of the recreation committees of several municipalities at some central location. Outline the values of area organization. Discuss common needs and interests among the communities represented. Establish continuing committees to deal with specific common recreational interests. The members of the participating recreation committees decide to continue to meet more or less regularly to exchange information for mutual assistance, for inspiration and stimulation, and for program evaluation. An example is the Lake Huron Zone, Ontario Municipal Recreation Association.

2
Convene a meeting of activity leaders and others interested in the development of a specific recreation activity (perhaps drama, crafts or square dancing) to exchange information, gain new knowledge, learn new skills, discuss resources and aids, hear a lecture, or participate in a demonstration. The possibility of future action on a cooperative basis is considered by the delegates from the various communities. This can advance the skill and appreciation of the individuals, and help them in effectively developing that interest in the community they represent, and in the area. Examples are Western Ontario Drama League, Central Ontario Art Association.

3
Convene a one-day or evening conference, for both recreation committee members and for leaders and others interested in the development of a specific recreational interest. Through discussion, lay down plans to establish continuous channels of communication and provide opportunities for the development of specific interests in the region.

Other methods of organization may present themselves, but these three have been successful. Note that, in each case, a decision was made to take *action.*

A further important point about these three organization methods is that the decisions were made by lay people—recreation committee members, activity leaders, interested persons. An effective zone development can only be built on the needs and interests of these people. Professional staffs can provide information and encouragement when required, but those actively involved and concerned about a particular recreational interest can provide the most effective leadership.

Standing committees

As suggested by the outlines, the most effective zones provide a continuing relationship between people who have similar interests in specific recreation activities. This relationship can be developed through joint standing committees. Membership in these committees is based on enthusiastic interest and/or action leadership in the

specific activity. Each participating community appoints one or more representatives to such a committee in the zone.

In Ontario area organizations there are standing committees for drama, square dancing, crafts, minor sports, art, senior citizens, and other activities in which there is common interest.

Once the area standing committee (or special committee for a single project) is organized and develops initial projects, it should continue to meet at regular intervals to:

- maintain established channels of communication.
- evaluate past projects.
- plan future community and inter-community development.
- provide assistance to any community requiring help, or any community wishing to initiate the activity.

The members of the various standing committees of the area might meet annually or semi-annually at a recreation conference at which reports of past projects and future plans are exchanged for mutual information and support.

The municipal recreation committee and area development

The municipal recreation committee and the area standing committees have many goals in common.

- The recreation committee is interested in the whole recreation program of the community. Area committees offer services and projects that represent important benefits to the program in each community.
- The recreation committee is interested in maintaining channels of communication with other recreation committees. Through the area organization these channels can be made continuous.
- The recreation committee is interested in the development of leaders for the programs it sponsors, co-sponsors, or assists. Leadership training opportunities can be provided through the area standing committees. The cost of leadership training courses that might be prohibitive for a single community can be shared with other communities through the area organization.

The municipal recreation committee has a responsibility to encourage and support each of the various area committees.

- Representatives should be promptly appointed to any area standing committee concerned with an activity that is of interest to the general public.
- Delegates should be encouraged to attend regularly the standing committee's meetings, information sessions, training courses, and other gatherings convened by the standing committees.
- Time should be allotted at recreation committee meetings to hear reports of the activities of the area standing committees from the delegates.
- The recreation committee should keep in continuous communication with other communities in the area to support the establishment of new standing committees whenever it will serve their common purpose and mutual interest.

Those who represent their communities on the area standing committees have an important job. They must attend the meetings convened and help their own communities to gain the maximum value from area committee activities. In cooperation with the recreation committee and other community agencies and institutions, they must publicize the cooperative projects and try to secure as many participants as possible for each area project.

Area development and OMRA

The Ontario Municipal Recreation Association encourages the formation of area organizations in the province and assists in their development. The association's annual conference provides an opportunity for the people from many areas to meet and exchange information and ideas.

The Youth and Recreation Branch of the Ontario Department of Education also helps and encourages the formation of area organizations through the program consultants located in the regional offices of the Department. The specialist staff of the branch is also able to offer counselling services.

For further information on committees and how they work, community organizations, etc., refer to *Notes for Community Leaders* produced by the Youth and Recreation Branch, and available from the regional offices.